(b) whether any review has been made by the Government regarding the performance of these offices; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI SRIKANTA JENA): (a) There are 18 Govt. of India Tourist offices operating abroad for promotion of Tourism in India.

(b) and (c). The performance of the Tourist offices abroad is being appraised from time to time with a view to ensuring that they work efficiently and effectively. The review of the performance of the offices is a continuing process.

Benefits to Poor People

1867. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA :
SHRI SHATRUGHAN PRASAD SINGH :

Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have formulated any scheme to strengthen the public distribution system;

(b) if so, the details of the items likely to be sold under this system to the poor people in rural areas at half the market price;

(c) whether the Government propose to make available more items like tea leaf, soap, pulses, iodised salt and Janta cloth under the public distribution system; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) :

(a) and (b). The Government proposes to streamline the Public Distribution System (PDS) with its focus on the poor. The details are being worked out in consultation with the State Governments/UT Administrations

(c) and (d) No, Sir. However States/UTs are reported to be distributing items like tea, pulses, iodised salt etc. through Public Distribution System according to local needs and preferences

Distribution of Essential Commodities

1868. SHRI SOUMYA RANJAN :
SHRI GIRDHARI LAL BHARGAVA :
SHRI BHERU LAL MEENA :
SHRI HARIN PATHAK :

Will the Minister of of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) the norms fixed for per unit distribution of essential commodities like wheat, rice, sugar and edible oil in rural and urban areas under the public distribution system;

(b) whether there is any disparity regarding distribution of essential commodities in rural and urban areas;

(c) if so, the details thereof, commodity-wise alongwith the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government to remove the disparity?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : (a) to (d). The norms fixed for per unit distribution of essential commodities like wheat, rice and edible oil for rural and urban areas are decided by the States/UTs themselves as part of their operational responsibility. For Sugar the allocation to States are being made at the rate of 425 gm. per head per month based on the 1991 census figures. The sale of issue of the commodities may vary from State to State and within a State depending on local needs and conditions. In case there is any disparity regarding distribution of essential commodities, it is for the State Government/UT Administrations to remove the same.

Workers in Marble Mines

1869. SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE : Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) the approximate number of workers engaged in the marble mining in Rajasthan;

(b) whether the Government propose to bring some legislation for providing higher amount of wages and creating better working conditions for them; and

(c) if so, the steps taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : (a) There are about 14,109 workers employed in Marble Mines in Rajasthan.

(b) No, Sir. The wages and working conditions of the workers employed in Marble Mines are governed by the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 and other relevant labour laws.

(c) Does not arise

New Telephone Exchanges in Kerala

1870. SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether all the telephone exchanges proposed for 1995-96 in Kerala have started functioning;

(b) if not, the reason therefor, and

(c) the names of district where the exchanges have not yet started functioning?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) and (b) Out of 53 Telephone